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Legislative Press Bureau at (401) 528-1743

THIS WEEK AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE HOUSE — Here are the highlights from news and events that took place in the General Assembly this week. For more information on any of these items visit <http://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **House Finance Committee approves 2017 budget bill**

The House Finance Committee has approved an \$8.96 billion 2017 state budget bill ([2016-H 7454A](#)), sponsored by House Finance Committee Chairman Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73, Newport), that includes no broad-based tax increases, provides tax relief to retirees, enhances the state's economic development tools, fully funds education, significantly scales back a proposal to tax medical marijuana and rolls back parking fees at state beaches to 2011 levels. The bill is scheduled to come before the full House for a vote Wednesday, after which it will be sent to the Senate. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **General Assembly passes patent troll legislation**

The General Assembly passed legislation ([2016-H 7425](#), [2016-S 2542](#)) introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) and Senate Minority Leader Dennis L. Algieri (R-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown), that prohibits a person or company from making bad faith assertions of patent infringement against a Rhode Island business or individual. The bill now heads to the governor's desk for signature. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **General Assembly passes bill forbidding sale, possession of shark fins**

The General Assembly passed legislation ([2016-S 2676A](#), [2016-H 7440](#)) sponsored by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) and Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to forbid the sale and possession of shark fins in Rhode Island. The measure now heads to the governor's office. [Click here to see news release.](#)

More...

- **General Assembly passes child abuse hotline legislation**

The General Assembly passed legislation ([2016-S 2368](#), [2016-H 7516](#)) that requires every public and private school in Rhode Island, including charter schools, to post a clear and visible sign for students that provide the state's child abuse hotline number. The legislation, sponsored by Sen. James E. Doyle II (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Rep. Raymond H. Johnston Jr. (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket), now heads to Governor Raimondo's desk for action.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **General Assembly OKs bill making sex traffickers register as sex offenders**

The General Assembly passed legislation that would make anyone convicted of sex trafficking be subject to the state's sex offender registration and community notification statute. The legislation ([2016-H 7318A](#), [2016-S 2516A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Robert E. Craven Sr. (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) and Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) now heads to the governor's desk.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **GE Selects Rhode Island for hundreds of new tech jobs**

House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston), Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown), and Governor Gina M. Raimondo announced that General Electric plans to bring new, advanced industry jobs to Rhode Island with the opening of a GE Digital information technology center. The new Providence-based office will be responsible for developing new software applications and driving innovation in High Performance Computing. GE anticipates the Rhode Island center to employ 100 people in the near term, with the aim of expanding its presence over the next several years.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House passes bill on power plant siting process, increasing local input**

The House approved legislation ([2016-H 8240A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Cale P. Keable (D-Dist. 47, Burrillville, Gloucester) to require that any tax agreement negotiated between the Burrillville Town Council and the developers of a proposed power plant in town be subject to voter approval, and to expand the Energy Facilities Siting Board. The Senate held a hearing on its version of the bill ([2016-S 3037](#)), sponsored by Sen. Paul W. Fogarty (D-Dist. 23, Gloucester, Burrillville, North Smithfield).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs Rep. Ruggiero bill to get more power from renewable sources**

The House approved legislation ([2016-H 7413A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) ensuring the state's commitment to renewable energy by extending the Renewable Energy Standard, currently scheduled to end in 2019, to 2035, and gradually increasing the percentage of electricity National Grid is required to purchase from renewable sources each year. The Senate passed identical legislation ([2016-S 2185A](#)) sponsored by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) earlier this session.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House passes McLaughlin bill to make school bus transportation cost efficient**
The House of Representatives unanimously passed legislation introduced by Rep. James N. McLaughlin (D-Dist. 57, Cumberland, Central Falls) that would increase the cost-efficiency of the state's school bus transportation plans. The bill ([2016-H 8005](#)) would allow school districts to maintain an annual registry for students requiring bus transportation to school.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate passes Pichardo bill to address racial disparities in school discipline**
The Senate passed legislation ([2016-S 2168](#)) introduced by Sen. Juan M. Pichardo (D-Dist. 2, Providence) that would direct all school superintendents to review discipline data for their school districts, to decide whether there is an unequal impact on students based on race, ethnicity, or disability status, and to respond to any disparity. The House passed similar legislation ([2016-H 7056](#)) introduced by Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence).
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